

**Chicago Meeting, 11-14-06**  
**Sheri Carroll '91**

I have my notes from the Chicago meeting but they tend to be more key comments than detailed notes. Those in attendance were Ginger, Skip and Heather along with 3 Board members Mary Scovanner '77 , Amanda Clark Fox '77 and Gail, whose last name and year I did not catch. Gail I believe indicated having only been on the Board for a month.

Ginger began her remarks with a history of how we got to where we are. Given that we were a small group and the history was still going on at 7:30 (with the remarks having been slated for 7-8) we interrupted her and asked if there would be time for questions, that it was felt many present knew what she was telling us and had questions we would like to see answered before the time of the event was over. Ginger politely said that staff would be glad to stay until all questions had been asked and answered but sure we could get started. She also expressed how she hoped this wouldn't become a board bashing experience, paraphrased and therefore not her exact words.

Included in this "how we got here portion" we heard:

They couldn't bring themselves to look at this seriously when Ginger was on the Board and that she did have some guilty feelings for us being in the place we are now and that she was thankful to the current board for being willing to tackle this tough situation when other Boards were not.

They have contacted 5 women's colleges who had gone co-ed and 5 who had stayed single sex and the single sex schools are either where they were or worse. (Did any of the 10 schools also incur a name change?)

In the 3 options spiel, a) go down with flags flying, b) merge with another woman's college or c) go co-ed; she indicated that "we committed to the students last November not to vote on this until students were back on campus." (If they were committed to the students, how can they turn around and say they don't have a contract or understanding with those same students to allow them the 4 years of a woman's college they chose?)

The comments in paranthesis are thoughts in hindsight, aka stewed upon on the drive home as wished upon follow-ups.

Ginger started by saying she knew some of the questions we would be asking and so offered to start with them. We only got to one of these and then the audience questions took over. The question she started with was:

How can other schools be doing so well? Just not true, sister schools of Hollins and Sweet Briar are not thriving. SB just arranged with VA Tech to allow 1 year abroad program at SB's campus. Hollins' grad program has been successful but in the undergraduate program it's just not so. She went on to indicate that our graduate program didn't really have a chance (not her words, but same implication) as Hollins due to competition with UVA, Lynchburg College and CVCC. (If you want to cast a net of graduate programs within an hour 1/2 radius from Hollins - same distance from RMWC to UVA, then you would include VA Tech, Radford, JMU and Roanoke College, so how has Hollins' program been so successful?)

She mentioned something about Roanoke being a more urban location with more people to attend continuing education programs -- I hate to tell her, having grown up less than 15 minutes from Hollins it is located on the VERY outskirts of Roanoke, in a less central environment than RMWC.)

Name change implementation of December 9th at 2pm possibly with web-streaming. Former trustees will be in attendance. Randolph College was mentioned a lot. "I (Ginger) hope the name could be Randolph College with us possibly calling it Macon on campus." (More identity issues, name it one thing but call it another on campus? Please, does she listen to what she says, and does it really make sense to her?)

That global honors is from the curriculum point of view, is academically excellent and an effort to be distinctive in the marketplace (what about all the other schools who also have global honors programs, how distinctive is this really going to be?)

I was surprised to hear the one alum ask about the time-line of if this is a success or not and at what point would they revert back? (Is this an isolated case or do more alumnae feel this is a trial period of going co-ed?) The response to this question was that this was a commitment to the course and "the course" must constantly be refined.

The follow-up question by the same alum wasn't answered completely. What happens to the endowment if it all goes under? Skip commented that part of the endowment was restricted. The comments diverted and he went on to explain that the Financial model has a 5-7 year timeframe. At the end of that timeframe is when they were re-access where they are and tweek from there. In answering, if it doesn't work do you dissolve . . . Mary S '77 said, The plan invisions increased enrollment and slow decrease of the discount. . . and then my notes left off -- sorry. Earlier there had been a mention of the endowment as having 8-10 year max for allowable spending should they try to continue moving forward as a woman's college. (What happened to the 20 years we heard about originally?)

Katy '80 asked How will we attract males to a school with no name and female stylized dorms? Most men want Engineering and Business majors, Big 10 football and basketball they can watch on ESPN. They like Majors with a job title in them. Combine this with 1) fewer men going to college, 2) of those, fewer going to Liberal Arts schools, 3) and of those who don't fit in those categories what will bring them to Lynchburg VA and a no-name, never heard of school with Lynchburg and Liberty already have programs geared for men?

In the process of answering this question Ginger told a story she had recently heard from a guidance counselor of a mom and son at a NC college fair. The mom said why would you want to go to a former women's college and the son responded, his best lab partners were girls so he would want to go to a school with more serious-minded students like his lab partners.

When asked who do they see as the RMWC student they said open-hearted, accepting of diversity, respectful of everyone from the switchboard operators to the PhD, respectful of individuality, strong independent thinkers who do there own research (which she commented lightheartedly as being a trait that had come back at her lately) who are very involved in our communities.

Mary S '77 commented that RMWC focus of education of the individual can still occur on a co-ed campus. The editorial from Roanoke Times re: Wheaton was dismissed as "probably not true"

because people they spoke to at Wheaton were surprised to learn of it. "Just because it is in the paper, especially the Roanoke Times, doesn't mean it is true." (Wasn't Roanoke the same "more urban area" that we didn't have to draw from but Hollins did, which was why Hollins' grad program was more successful than ours?) They said the mission of providing quality education will be the same (mission was to provide quality education for WOMEN.)

You asked about the financial reports: the '05 financial were available and the 990's and 6/06 audit was recently presented (not sure if "presented" is the right word) at the November BOT meeting.

I was starting to get annoyed so my notes are becoming more fragmented; sorry.

It was reported that there had been a \$3.4 million deficit last year in budget, \$1.4 million has been cut from the budget, significant amounts of deferred maintenance, \$2-4 million less in expenses than peer institutions, balanced budget 5 out of last 21 years, small, less than 1% deficits in many of those years, endowed funds used for renovation for President's house though house was purchased with specified alumnae gifts.

When asked if any of the art work have been sold publicly or privately the answer was "if the art is sold you will know about it." When asked about the art tours of Lorimer's time, (to gain recognition of the college) "it was very expensive to do, about \$55,000 to move the pieces, some companies assisted with some of the costs." She went to elaborate that the art is a wonderful treasure but we are not a museum, we are a college. If it came down to choosing to be a museum or a college I would choose to be a college. Later it was asked if they had considered increasing the focus of the art program to include the Maier items more actively in the college life. BOT Amanda said they "platform tested an art program curriculum that received almost no market response." A follow-up was asked if they had considered a summer program for adults, the response was not enough adults in the Lynchburg area with interest in continuing education in the field of art, and even if there had been it would be enough money brought in.

Birgetta (I know I've misspelled that, sorry) commented on the poorly done currently used marketing pieces for Admissions, apparently the pictures are vague, blurry, not showing anything really outstanding. Heather commented every 5 years Admissions engages a new marketing plan.

It was asked if the name of the Alumnae Association would be changed. The answer was vague saying that we will always be RMWC alumnae (duh), the bookstore will always carry RMWC items but the official process of what is to happen with the Association is in the planning process and most likely they would try and combine the two names to form some name for the Association. The one thing we can't keep is the [www.rmwc.edu](http://www.rmwc.edu) as any school can only have one .edu

There was a reference but I don't know if it was to the global honors or to the graduate program in adding to the college's distinction, indicating a possible program name: the school for diplomacy and peace studies. Areas of distinction we already have include the global aspect of the college with 47 countries (11% of the student population) represented on campus. Ginger had a phrase she repeated several times, that this global-ness is one of "deep roots", the campus having had a Chinese student in 1907. It was asked if the international students get more of a discount than the traditional students and do they get a free-ride. The comment free-ride cause frantic glances between Skip, Amanda (BOT) and Ginger, to which Ginger said I believe they might receive a bit more than US students.

I commented that when I worked at G'town, the international students received no financial aid (as they didn't have a W-2 to base it on for the FAFSA purpose) why does RMWC allow internationals to get the same discount as US residents if not more? Skip (one of the few times he was borderline curt) said that they filled beds that would otherwise go empty. Amanda said "they bring in more money over the 4 years because they stay." (This doesn't make sense to me, not all of the students leave, so how much are they paying out to get the internationals here to earn "more over 4 years" as it was always specified.)

I asked how many of the international students would be allowed to return now that the college has decided to go co-ed? Ginger responded that they knew they would most likely lose some of the Muslim students. They were hopeful they may be able to keep some by using segregated dorms. (But can they segregate the library, classes, cafeteria? From the roster distributed at council, there are 34 countries with these breakdowns: Bulgaria 3, Phillipines 2, Nepal 16, Jamaica 11, Ukraine 3, China 4, Pakistan 2, Japan 5, Spain 2, Vietnam 3, Russia 2, Thailand 2, and all of the following have one student: Lebanon, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Romania, Poland, Ghana, Canada, Croatia, India, France, Moldova, Trinidad and Tobago, Ethiopia, No. Ireland, Myanmar, New Zealand, Germany, Mauritius, Peru, Macedonia, United Kingdom and Kenya for a grand total of 77 international students.)

When asked what was being done to maintain Academic Rigor and not degrading the value of the curriculum. What is being done to help keep staff? This they specified "they are keeping the YOUNG faculty involved and active in this process" stating they have over 50 members involved in implementation. The newer curriculum will be evolved over time with at least 2 -3 areas to start next fall. Nothing was said in regards to trying to keep older staff.

One alumna asked about the endowment. Her specific question was what oversights are in place to prevent another significant loss, such as the recent loss of \$52 million? Skip explained that our all-time high endowment was in 82-83 when we had 12-13 billion [this was originally misheard and misreported as "billion"]. In Spring of '02 it was at \$152 million. After 9/11 and decline of the stock market there has been a decline of 50 million over the last 4 years, even though in 2 of those 4 years there has been positive return. I didn't note the time frame but there was a mention of "having had the luxury of taking a 7% draw."

It was noted that Cambridge Associates is the current 3rd party investment/financial committee. The Portfolio was rebalanced 3 years ago. (This doesn't make sense to me as I'm not a business-minded person, but this is what I wrote.) By conducting the repositioning there has been an average return just under 10%, past year 9% total return and the endowment is currently at \$140 million. I have one random note after this that says "moved out of individual equity." When asked about alternative investments, Skip responded there was a combination of hedge funds, real estate investments and other similar investments.

Skip was asked by this same alum how much was factored in the A&S information for reduced alumnae support? He said "a significant amount." This was later re-asked and again "a significant amount" was the answer. A question that raised bristles on Skip, Ginger and Amanda was "why wasn't PEC's "give us 6 months to raise the money" bluff called on? What would it have hurt to give them a chance and see if it could be done?" Skip explained that the College had just come out of a 75 million campaign where normally you would expect to receive 1 gift of 10 million and at least

2 million of 5. With an extended timeframe due to the market and 9/11 the goal was met but without any donations higher than \$4 million. Amanda indicated it couldn't be done so why waste time on it?

I explained how HSC for the past 20 years has periodically floated to its alumna the possibility of one day going co-ed, yet people still give and support the college and students still come, thus in my mind dispelling their often touted "people don't give to a sinking ship" theory.. If the letter we got indicating the change to co-ed had come from HSC we would have been expecting it because they had had the courtesy to keep the alumna accurately informed on the state of the college. I asked, if the alumnae had been told of the college's true state and the considerations of the Board they may have been able to dig-deeper and come up with and that by not humoring us and letting us at least try, the BOT didn't do everything possible to see if the college could have stayed single sex.

Skip said something about the "common courtesy comment" and I said, they didn't even keep the college offices that would be most impacted in the loop. That they should have informed development and admissions as to what was going on so they could have been planning ahead. For alumnae to be told a month after the vote at Leadership council repeatedly that there was no plan was inexcusable. If the plan wasn't necessary and the vote to co-ed had not occurred, the plans could have been shredded but at least the school would have been prepared.

I asked how many of the current class of 2010 are going to be supporting alumnae when they graduate and how many would have been supporting alumnae had they been allowed to have the 4 years they chose? Amanda Clark Fox just rolled her eyes and shrugged her shoulders. She said something that implied that young alumnae don't give anything significant anyway. I responded 1) how many of the AARs are graduates less than 5 years out? Heather shrugged her shoulders obviously uncomfortable with the tension, I asked if the number was around 60%, she said yes. I said that the AAR's are on the front line at the college fairs getting out to talk to students when the admissions staff can't. 2) They may not be giving in money but they are assisting the college in a far more valuable way in getting students to look at the school.

Somehow that segwayed into students being marketed with UVA, and we said we weren't UVA and they said but that is who we are competing with. I said I found it hard to believe that students are looking at schools of both 750 and 10,000 when it has been my experience of 15 years of college fairs that one of the first questions asked is what size is your school and then they either stay or walk away. It is too large of range for them to realistically consider both. Many alums said that they knew kids applied to the nearby large school as a back-up or it's the thing to do, but agreed they could not see where a large school such as UVA was serious competition for a school our size. Heather said the basis for their belief was knowing from the students which schools they are applying to. (I still say applying and truly intending on going are two different things.)

The grand finale of my departure is pretty much a blur. I left because I was getting to a point where I was going to be REALLY rude very fast. I don't know what sparked it, but something was said about this not going anywhere? I asked something about why are they doing this show if they don't really want to hear how the alumnae feel, that they just want yes-men. They had 3 years to come to grips with this and expect us to be on board 100% after less than 6 months. They said they want open discussion, I said they want to hear what they want to hear and anything is to them is just nonsense. Not one suggestion or comment made by an alum they detoured from compliance with the plan and been given any credence of respect. At that point I HAD to leave.

In the mention of grand finale I realized I haven't included THE question that you guys came up with. Many people responded to me with questions and comments. I did go forth with the Q-tip plan. I made a cardstock carrot with "please use so you will be ready to hear fresh ideas" printed on it. This was then glued to the box of Q-tips. I also brought brownies for each of the BOT members with carrots frosted on them. About 2/3 of the way through the meeting it was determined to be the time to ask THE question.

While distributing the treats, I said, Halloween has recently passed and with it comes treats, so I have treats for you. We realize the time and effort that the members of the Board have put into this process and understand this has not been an easy time. As many of you know I post frequently on the listserv and if you've followed it lately you know I asked for questions to be asked tonight. I heard from many alumnae both who are here and who could not be here and here is the question they asked me to ask,

"it is obvious to many of us that there has been mismanagement, inattention to detail and betrayal of the trust of alumnae, students and faculty. Saying "you're sorry" is appreciated but not enough. Will you confront the truth, and admit that your decision was made in haste and was wrong? Will you please resign?"

Ginger's response was "was there a question in that?" (Actually there were 2.) And I said, yes there was, will you please resign?, she said curtly, without elaboration, no.

That's all I have. I'm sorry it is not more complete and rambles at times. I am posting for the upcoming meetings. I am hopeful that other meeting attendees will either post their individual notes or compile for a group posting but felt some information should get out for the other shows to utilize, Sonja did get a preview of these for last night's San Francisco meeting. Most of the comments are paraphrasing. I have tried to be careful in using quotation marks only when I was 99% positive of the wording.